

NORWEGIAN LITERATURE IN ROMANIAN TRANSLATION: 1990-06.2020

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ABSTRACT. *Norwegian Literature in Romanian Translation: 1990-06.2020*².

The present paper offers an insight into the Norwegian literature translated into the Romanian language that was published after the fall of the communist regime and until the first half of 2020. The main problems that were studied include the number of Norwegian authors that were translated, the Romanian translators, the contact languages and the books published with grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), the preferred genres, the Romanian publishing houses, the cities where the books appeared and an overview of the books per year. Attention was also given to BBU alumni that translated directly from the Norwegian.

Keywords: *Norwegian literature, Scandinavian studies, translation, distant reading, quantitative studies, NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), Babeş-Bolyai University*

REZUMAT. *Literatura norvegiană tradusă în limba română: 1990-06.2020*.

Prezenta lucrare oferă o privire de ansamblu asupra literaturii norvegiene tradusă în limba română de după căderea comunismului și până în prima jumătate a anului 2020. Principalele probleme studiate includ numărul de scriitori norvegieni traduși, traducătorii români, limbile de contact și fondurile de la NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), genurile preferate de către public, editurile românești, numărul de cărți traduse per orașe și statistica per an. O atenție considerabilă a fost acordată și absolvenților UBB care au tradus direct din norvegiană.

Cuvinte cheie: *literatură norvegiană, studii scandinave, traducere, literatura văzută de departe, studii cantitative, NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai*

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² The article is part of a forthcoming bibliography of Norwegian literature translated into the Romanian that is about to be published at Casa Cărții de Știință (Cluj-Napoca) in the collection *Nordica* coordinated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu. The author has tried to show as much as possible an extensive image of the topic while taking into consideration that new documentary sources can always appear in the research horizon. The following study focuses primarily on the volumes published and not on the periodical literature or manuscripts of translations.

Norwegian literature in translation does not occupy the main area of interest when it comes to international literary or translation studies and even less space is given to quantitative studies overall. This is in part due to the fact that Norwegian is seen as a minor language in Europe, one that is indexed in catalogues and libraries with the other Northern Germanic counterparts, such as Danish, Swedish, Icelandic and Faroese. Among these, Norwegian does not hold a central role, as Swedish is the most translated Scandinavian language into Romanian.

Focusing on Norwegian literature translated into Romanian, I will try to showcase the main Norwegian authors, translators and publishing houses, while also discussing the main contact languages and giving an overview of the number of translations per year. Another area of interest is given to translations made by BBU alumni directly from the Norwegian original. Of course, many translations in Romania and in many other countries would not be possible without NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad), the main institution which promotes Norwegian literature outside of Norway.

The present study borrows Franco Moretti's concepts of distant reading and quantitative studies in order to construct an overview of the situation of Norwegian literature in the Romanian literary landscape after the fall of the communist regime. In order to do that I have selected a corpus of 173 volumes containing 202 titles, including stories, short prose, theatre plays and micro novels, that were published after 1990 and until the first half of 2020. The titles were selected mainly from the catalogues of "Octavian Goga" Cluj County Library and „Lucian Blaga" Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca. The information gathered was then double-checked in other national and international catalogues, such as the *Romanian National Bibliography* and *Index Translationum*. Another relevant catalogue in my research was *Oria.no*, containing the translations from Norwegian into Romanian found at the National Library of Norway³. More so, I have consulted *The Chronological Dictionary of Translated Novels in Romania 1990-2000 (DCRT)*, published by the Romanian Academy (Cluj-Napoca Branch).

The first subject of analysis was the current situation of Norwegian authors (or authors of Norwegian language) translated into the Romanian language. All in all, there are a total of 75 Norwegian writers that have been translated into Romanian in the period between 1990 and June of 2020 (see figure 1). Jo Nesbø is the most translated writer into Romanian with 17 translations, followed closely by Jørn Lier-Horst with 16. The famous author of the series *My Struggle* and *The Seasons Quartet*, Karl Ove Knausgård and Jostein Gaarder, most known for his work *Sophie's World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy*, have both

³ Oria.no, NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) [https://bibsyst-almaprmo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do?vid=NORLA].

10 titles translated. Gaarder's *Sophie's World* has been translated 3 times, most famously by Mircea Ivănescu (with 5 editions and perhaps more), by Mariana Petrescu and by Ana Mihăilescu. The following authors are Anne Holt with 7 translations, Knut Hamsun with 6 volumes containing 9 titles, Per Petterson with 5 entries and Lars Saabye Christensen with 4 translated titles and 2 editions of *Beatles* (translated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu).

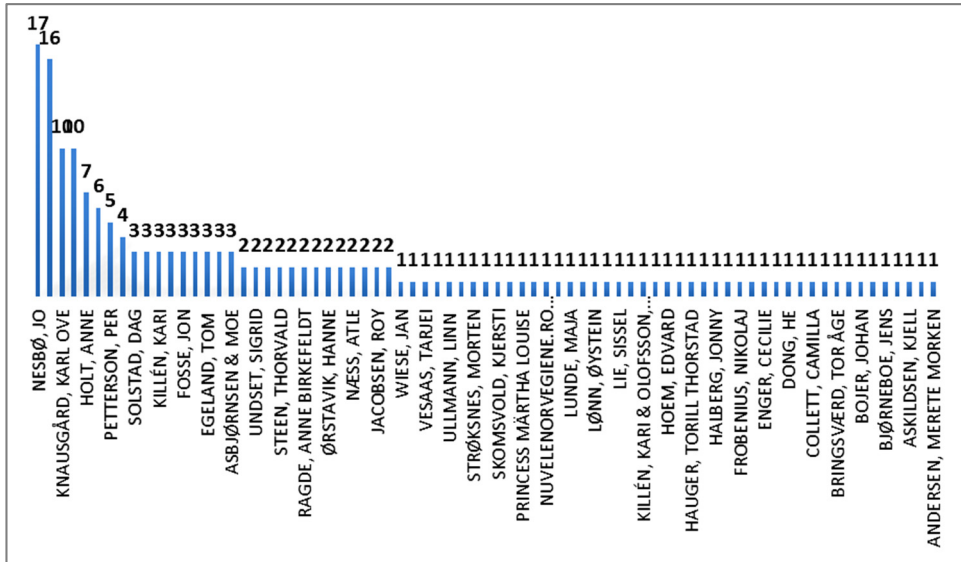


Figure 1. Norwegian literature in Romanian translation: 1990-06.2020.

The next authors have all 3 translations overall: Dag Solstad, Amalie Skram, Kari Killén, Henrik Ibsen, Jon Fosse (with a total of 7 titles), Knut Faldbakken, Tom Egeland, Finn Carling and, finally, Asbjørnsen & Moe. With 2 volumes translated, we find: Sigrid Undset, Lars Svendsen, Thorvald Steen, Åsne Seierstad, Anne Birkefeldt Ragde, Bobbie Peers, Hanne Ørstavik, Fridtjof Nansen, Atle Næss, Hedvig Montgomery, Roy Jacobsen and Ingvar Ambjørnsen. All the rest have one translation each.

It is worth mentioning that there are 2 volumes of fairytales with unknown author. Also, there exists only one anthology entitled *Nuvele norvegiene.ro: norske noveller.no* (published by Casa Cărții de Știință in Cluj-Napoca) that contains 12 short stories only by Norwegian writers translated by Sanda Tomescu Baciu. These authors are: Knut Hamsun, Johan Borgen, Kjell Askildsen, Bjørg Vik, Øystein Lønn, Sidsel Mørck, Wera Sæther, Gunnar Staalesen, Lars Saabye Christensen, Jan Kjærstad, Thorvald Steen and Unni Lindell.

Another key element of my research is focused on the Romanian translators, whether they translated directly from the Norwegian or from English, German and French (see figure 2 with a total of 69 translators).

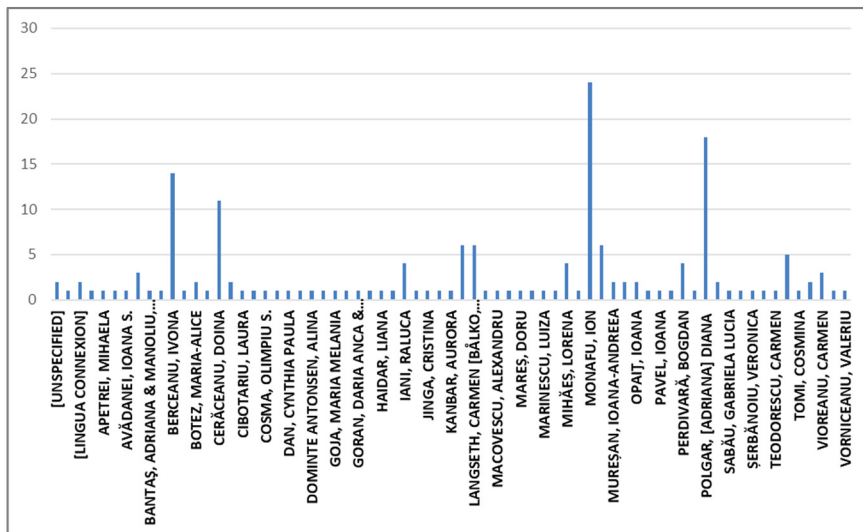


Figure 2. Romanian translators of Norwegian literature (1990-06.2020).

The most translations pertain to Ion Monafu with 24 translations in total (from English) that appeared at Pandora Publishing. He is followed closely by the BBU graduate Diana Polgar with 18 titles translated directly from the Norwegian original. Another tireless and enthusiastic translator, Ivona Berceanu (also a BBU alumni), has currently translated 14 titles from the Norwegian with an incredible steadiness. The following is Doina Cerăceanu with 11 volumes, although the contact language is not always specified. With 6 translations in total, we have Aurora Kanbar & Erling Schøller and Carmen Langseth (or Karmen Bålko). Valeriu Munteanu has also translated 6 volumes containing 9 titles by Knut Hamsun. He is the central figure that has translated Knut Hamsun’s literary work into Romanian.

Sanda Tomescu Baciu, who laid the foundations of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at „Babeș-Bolyai“ University, follows closely with 5 translations from authors such as Henrik Ibsen, Lars Saabye Christensen and Maja Lunde. Even more, she translated an anthology dedicated to the genre of short prose.

With 4 entries, we have Raluca Iani, Lorena Mihăeș and Bogdan Perdivară. Justina Bandol has currently translated from the English the first 3 volumes from *The Seasons Quartet* by Karl Ove Knausgård. Carmen Vioreanu has also translated 3 volumes which contain 7 titles from which 4 are plays by Jon Fosse, also dubbed “the other Ibsen”.

Two translations are by an unspecified translator. Another two unspecified translations are made through Lingua Connexion (in partnership with RAO Publishing). Also with 2 translations are Maria-Alice Botez, Marlena Chirilă Røimål, Ioana-Andreea Mureșan, Ovio Olaru, Ioana Opaț, Simina Răchiteanu and Marie-Jeanne Vasiloiu.

With just one entry, there is a translation made through Graal Soft. The translators with just one entry are the following: Georgiana & Ionuț Achim, Mihaela Apetrei, Venera Antonescu, Ioana S. Avădanei, Bantaș Adriana & Victoria Manoliu, Angela Benea, Marius Blăjuț, Speranța & Marian Brătescu, Laura Cibotariu, Anamaria Ciobanu, Olimpiu S. Cosma, Aurel Covaci, Cynthia Paula Dan, Maria Dobrinioiu, Alina Dominte Antonsen, Roxana-Ema Dreve, Maria Melania Goja, Daria Anca Goran, Daria Anca Goran, & Ana Muntean, Monica-Livia Grigore, Liana Haidar, Petru Iamandi, Mircea Ivănescu, Cristina Jinga, Antonia Kacsó, Aurora Kanbar, Ramona Lupu, Alexandru Macovescu, Bogdan Nicolae Marchidanu, Doru Mareș, B. Marian, Luiza Marinescu, Ana-Daniela Micu, Ana Mihăilescu, Corneliu Papadopol, Ioana Pavel, Liliana Pelici, Mariana Petrescu, Gabriela Lucia Sabău, Simona Schouten, Veronica Șerbănoiu, Ciprian Șiulea, Carmen Teodorescu, Cosmina Tomi, Bogdan Voiculescu, Valeriu Vorniceanu.

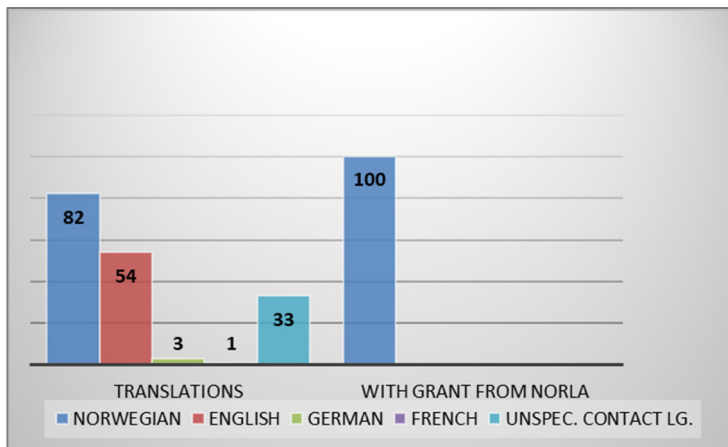


Figure 3. Contact languages and grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad).

Another crucial aspect was the language of contact and how many of these translations have been published with grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad). As we can see below, there are 82 volumes that have been translated directly from the Norwegian. English occupies, evidently, the second place with 54 translated volumes. There are 3 translations with German as the contact language, while only one has been made through French. A considerable 33 volumes do not specify their contact language, although it can be easily inferred that it is English.

A staggering 100 volumes have been published with grants from NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad)⁴, the main institution that promotes Norwegian literature outside of Norway. The highest number of translations from the Norwegian have been published in 2019, namely 25, coinciding with Norway as the Guest of Honour at Frankfurter Buchmesse. The leader of this project was Halldór Gudmundsson, coordinated by NORLA's director Margit Walsø. In the autumn of 2018-2019, NORLA managed to grant the publishing of 510 titles for the German market. Participation was also high, with 100 Norwegian authors taking part in the festival and with 100.000 guests at the pavilion.

Romania has deeply benefited from NORLA's work, especially after the fall of communism in December of 1989. Without censorship and the dissolution of Securitate, a steady increase of translations from Norwegian writers could be seen in Romania as a way to reconstruct democracy and to synchronise with other countries and cultures.

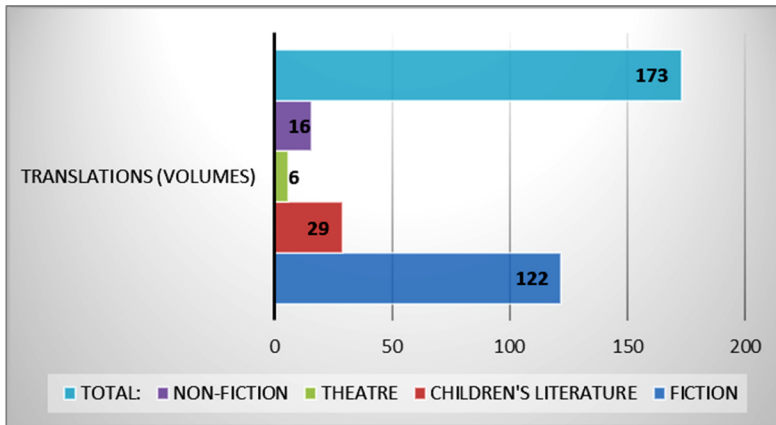


Figure 4. Overview of the genres translated.

⁴ Earlier known as MUNIN (Marketing Unit for Norwegian Non-Fiction) from 1996 until 2003 and founded by Elisabet W. Middelthon. However, it was Kristin Brudevoll who was NORLA's first director from 1978 until 2006.

When it comes to the genres most translated into Romanian, fiction is the most preferred genre with 122 volumes translated. Children's literature is on the rise generally in Romania, with the book market increasingly promoting the genre. A number of 29 translations from Norwegian authors have appeared in Romania. Non-fiction is the next most liked genre, with 16 titles translated. Lastly, theatre is represented by writers such as Henrik Ibsen (3 titles translated) and Jon Fosse (3 volumes containing 7 titles).

The publishing houses in Romania have learned time and time again to hire translators that are capable of working with the original: a gladdening thing in itself. All in all, there are 36 publishing houses that have showed interest in Norwegian writers. From these, Univers Publishing House has translated 31 titles, mostly from the Norwegian. Pandora Publishing follows with 28 titles (from English). Trei Publishing (including the imprint Lifestyle Publishing) has translated 19 titles. Paralela 45 has published 15 titles and RAO 12. Alfa and Litera follow with 10 titles translated. Tempus Publishing (also called Tempus Dacoromânia Comiterra or Editura Dacoromână TDC) has translated 6 titles. From Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință has published 5 titles, the same number as Vivaldi Publishing. With 2 translated titles, we have the following publishing houses: Garamond, Humanitas Fiction, Nemira, Polirom, Vremea and Waldpress.

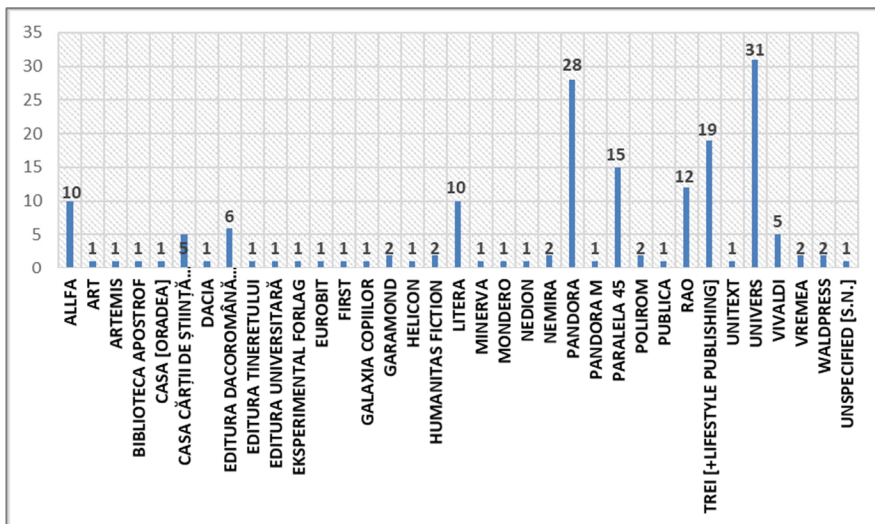


Figure 5. Romanian publishing houses translating Norwegian authors.

All the rest have published only one title: Agape, Art, Artemis, Biblioteca Apostrof, Casa [Oradea], Dacia, Editura Tineretului, Editura Universitară, Eksperimental Forlag, Eurobit, First, Galaxia Copiilor, Helicon, Minerva,

Mondero, Nedion, Pandora M, Publica, Unitext. There is also one title published by an unknown publishing house.

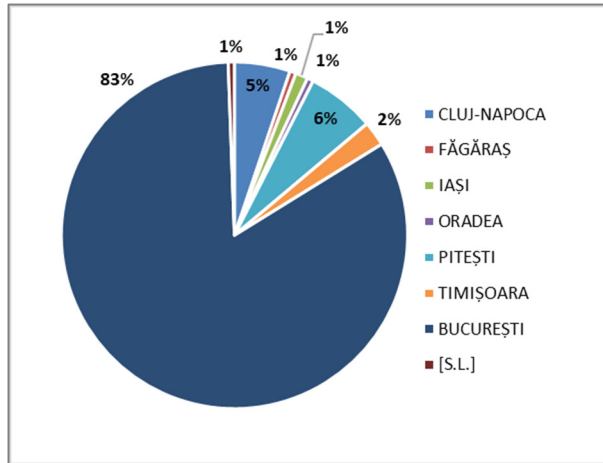


Figure 6. Distribution of translations per city.

The distribution per cities is quite unequal unfortunately. As expected, the capital Bucharest (București) has published the most titles.

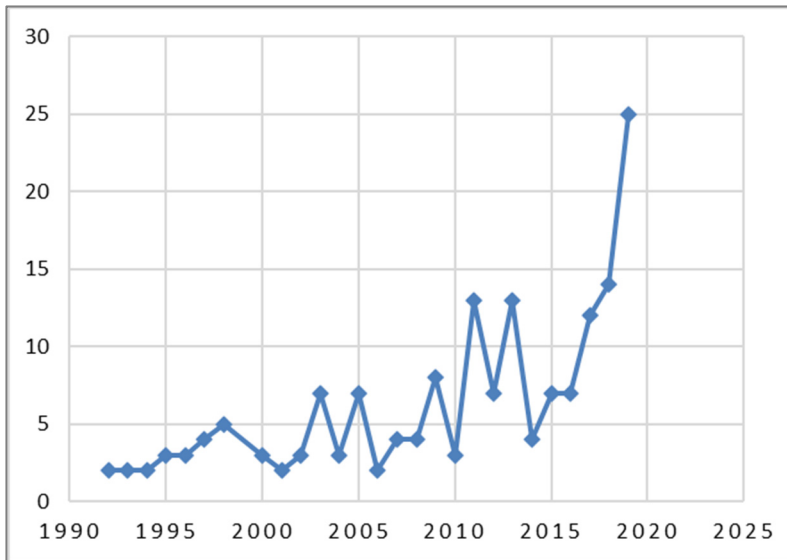


Figure 7. Distribution of titles per year.

As we can see above, Bucharest has published 83+% of the translations, namely 144 titles. The other cities have only a few titles published, such as Pitești with 11 titles (6%), Cluj-Napoca with 9 titles (5%), Timișoara with 4 titles (2%), Iași with 2 titles (1%), Făgăraș and Oradea with 1 title (1%) and an unlocated publishing house with 1 title (1%).

As the above graph shows, the number of titles has increased each year. In the period **1990-2000**, there are about 2 to 5 titles published each year for a total of **24 titles** published during this decade. This situation changes in the 2000's with as much as 7 titles published in the years 2003 and 2005 and a high of 8 titles in 2009, respectively. During the period **2001-2010**, **43 titles** have been published. The highest numbers are maintained throughout the period **2011-2020** with inasmuch as **106 titles**, as follows: 3 titles in 2010, 4 titles in 2014 and 2020, 7 titles in 2012, 2015 and 2016, 12 titles in 2017, 13 titles in 2011 and 2013, 14 titles in 2018 and a high of 25 titles published in 2019, when Norway was the Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

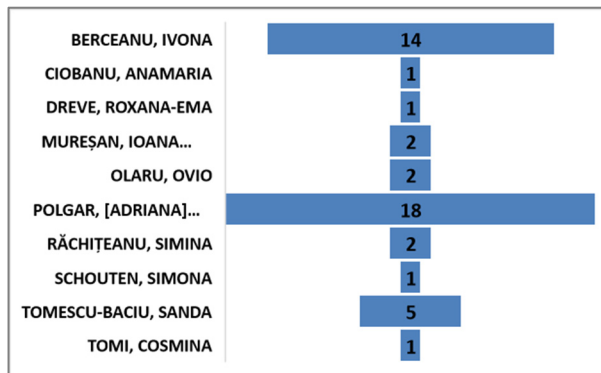


Figure 8. BBU alumni translating directly from Norwegian.

Finally, close attention should be given to the promoters of the Norwegian language and culture from „Babeș-Bolyai“ University in Cluj-Napoca, who have translated directly from the Norwegian. These translators are BBU alumni and all of them have studies in the Norwegian language and literature from „Babeș-Bolyai“ University, except the founder of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures, Sanda Tomescu Baciu, who has also graduated from the University of Oslo.

Overall, they have published 47 books translated directly from the Norwegian original which makes up for 21% from the total market of 173 volumes published. The publishing houses that represented them are: Allfa,

ART, Biblioteca Apostrof, Casa (Oradea), Casa Cărții de Știință (Cluj-Napoca), Galaxia Copiilor, Humanitas Fiction, Litera, Nemira, Paralela 45, Polirom Trei (including the imprint Lifestyle Publishing), Univers and Waldpress.

At last, we notice an upward trend of translations from the Norwegian language that could not have been possible without the strong collaboration between NORLA (Norwegian Literature Abroad) and „Babeș-Bolyai“ University, as well as the aforementioned Romanian publishing houses.

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